



2022 ADVOCACY AGENDA

We ALL benefit when children and families thrive, including those growing up in Black, Indigenous and communities of color. At Children's Defense Fund-Minnesota, we believe everyone has a role to play in ensuring every child has a *Healthy Start*, a *Head Start*, a *Fair Start*, a *Safe Start* and a *Moral Start* in life and successful passage to adulthood with the help of caring families and communities. The Children's Defense Fund envisions a nation where marginalized children flourish, leaders prioritize their well-being, and communities wield the power to ensure they thrive.

As COVID continues to upend our communities and families, Minnesota state and local leaders have responded with urgency and creativity. We at CDF-MN are ready to work with policymakers to continue that extraordinary leadership and use federal funding and the historic state budget surplus to create public policies and a budget that move Minnesota children and families forward in the following ways and more.

LEAD

INCREASING FLEXIBILITY, COORDINATION AND SIMPLIFICATION OF PUBLIC PROGRAMS

Across Minnesota's working family supports, the crisis has revealed new ways of operating that better support children and families. **CDF MN will lead in partnership with advocates, state and federal policymakers and administrators to permanently adopt COVID innovations, reduce benefits cliffs and increase coordination that make public programs, especially MFIP, work better for families.**



EXPANDING ACCESS TO PAID FAMILY AND MEDICAL LEAVE

Access to paid leave to care for oneself or a family member is more important than ever, yet 73% of Minnesotans with children that were not working in late August were receiving no pay. **CDF-MN will lead, in coalition, to advance a state Paid Family and Medical Leave social insurance program that addresses racial and geographic economic and health disparities.**



BUILDING A CHILD CARE SYSTEM THAT IS AFFORDABLE, ACCESSIBLE AND CULTURALLY-RELEVANT TO MEET THE NEEDS OF ALL PARENTS AND CHILDREN

A precarious childcare system with shortages before the pandemic has been kept on life-support by increased emergency state and federal funding. **CDF-MN will lead efforts to align advocates around a transformation of the early care and education mixed delivery system that meets the needs of all kinds of parents and children and is supported by the necessary permanent, new state and federal investments.**



PARTNER

IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL SUCCESS WITH CULTURALLY RELEVANT IN AND OUT-OF-SCHOOL PROGRAMMING AND BIPOC TEACHERS

Culturally relevant programming and BIPOC teachers are proven approaches for achieving educational success among BIPOC children. **CDF-MN and its Freedom Schools program will partner to advance the state and local policy changes and increased investments necessary to ensure culturally relevant out-of-school and in-school opportunities and diversification of the teaching profession.**



INCREASING ACCESS TO MENTAL HEALTH SUPPORTS FOR BIPOC AND RURAL CHILDREN AND FAMILIES

Minnesota families and institutions serving children across a variety of settings (schools, childcare, healthcare, employers) agree with the American Academy of Pediatrics declaration of a national emergency in child and adolescent mental health. **CDF-MN will partner on coalition efforts to ramp up and improve mental health supports for parents and children.**



INVESTING IN COMMUNITY-GENERATED SOLUTIONS

Communities know best what they need to create healthy children and families. Unfortunately, limited funding has left too many good ideas under-funded or not funded at all. **CDF-MN will partner in coalition to use remaining federal COVID relief and the state budget surplus to more fully fund the Community Solutions for Healthy Child Development grant program.**



USING FLEXIBLE CASH SUPPORTS TO CREATE FAMILY ECONOMIC STABILITY

Flexible cash is the most frequently cited need identified by families in listening sessions throughout the state. Research shows that cash allows families to weather economic ups and downs and move them into economic stability. **CDF-MN will continue to partner with local, state and federal leaders to provide flexible cash supports through universal basic income and flexible benefit set pilots, improved administration of MFIP cash benefits, and implementation of state and federal tax credits.**



SUPPORT

ADVANCING FOOD ACCESS TO ENSURE NO CHILD GOES HUNGRY

Minnesotans with children are twice as likely as those without children to report food insufficiency within the past 7 days. **CDF-MN will support coalition campaigns to remove school meal barriers, build on pandemic EBT and other COVID innovations and increase Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) access.**



KEEPING FAMILIES IN STABLE HOUSING

Housing assistance and eviction moratoriums are among the policies that have helped mitigate homelessness and other potential unstable housing harms for children. **CDF-MN will support a continuation of these policies and a variety of approaches to protect children from homelessness and housing instability as Minnesota recovers from the pandemic and continues to address the long-standing effects of systemic racism on housing access.**



CREATING A MORE EQUITABLE UNEMPLOYMENT INSURANCE SYSTEM

Early in the pandemic during federal expansions, an estimated 341,000 Minnesotans with children benefitted from Unemployment Insurance (UI). However, even with federal improvements another 64,000 applied but were unable to access the program. **CDF-MN will support coalition efforts to update Minnesota's UI system to better serve working families subject to volatility in low wage work.**



For more information, please contact

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